

Mental Health Advocacy Perspectives on Tobacco Cessation

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What is NAMI?

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness.

3 Levels of NAMI

NAMI National

- NAMI Board of Directors
- State Presidents Council
- Consumer Council
- Veterans Council
- Executive Directors Group

NAMI State Organizations

NAMI Affiliate Organizations

National Signature Programs

- Family-to-Family Education Program
- Provider Education Program
- Peer-to-Peer Program
- In Our Own Voice
- Hearts & Minds
- NAMI Support Group Facilitator Training
- NAMI Connection
- NAMI Basic

Communications

- Helpline
- Web site in July (700,000 visits)
- Three publications: Beginnings, Advocate and Avanzamos
- Electronic Publications
- E-News
- Stigmabusters

Tobacco and Serious Mental Illness (SMI)

- People with SMI are 2x as likely to smoke
People with schizophrenia are 3-4x as likely to smoke
- People with SMI die 25 years younger due largely to conditions caused or worsened by smoking
- Smokers with schizophrenia spend >1/4 of their total income on cigarettes.

Tobacco and Serious Mental Illness (SMI)

- Tobacco use interferes with psychiatric medications.
- Even highly addicted smokers with mental illness can quit and are more likely to succeed with a combination of medications and behavioral therapy

More than Bans

- What if an addicted patient refuses hospitalization just because they cannot smoke in the hospital?
- If smoking alters medication levels and a patient is likely to smoke after discharge, how do we find the right dosages?
- Smoking breaks have been allowed to be an important social activity in hospitals and clinics

More than Bans

- In some facilities, profits from selling cigarettes has been an important source of revenue
- In some facilities, cigarettes proved to be a convenient reward for behavioral reinforcement
- A divide between Consumers and Families: Is smoking a priority when struggling with paternalism

More than Bans

- Violence decreased after a smoking ban
 - Smoke breaks are infrequent enough to guarantee repeated irritability of withdrawal
- Common Ground: Support Smoking Cessation with medications and psychosocial interventions
 - People with SMI may require longer support groups

Making the Case

- Tobacco can be a greater health risk than medication non-compliance
- No one wants to be manipulated:
 - Tobacco industry trade group: “cigarette smoking is becoming a downscale social activity”
 - RJ Reynolds marketing survey: this downscale demographic is “more impressionable to marketing/advertising... they’re more susceptible. They’re less formed intellectually... more malleable.”